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**Xavier Pla, Maximiliano Fuentes and Francesc Montero, eds, *A Civil War of Words: The Cultural Impact of the Great War in Catalonia, Spain, Europe and Latin America*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016, vii, 441 pp., £63.72, ISBN 978-3-0343-1950-8**

All historians agree that the Great War was a veritable turning-point in modern history. Metaphorically, darkness descended over Europe in the summer of 1914. The ensuing cataclysm resulted in eight and a half millions deaths, reshaped the map of the continent and initiated a period of unprecedented socio-political radicalism described by Eric Hobsbawm as “an age of catastrophe”. Indeed, the armistice did not usher in an era of social normalization and political stability but, on the contrary, what followed can be described as an European Civil War marked by economic upheaval and extremism that finally exploded in 1939 into the even greater tragedy of World War II.

Overshadowed by events in the middle of that century –Republic, Civil War and General Francisco Franco’s Dictatorship – the earlier decades of the century, and in particular the years of neutrality during the Great War – had been until recent times one of the areas of modern Spanish history that needed most research and debate. This dearth of academic studies has only been gradually corrected in the last 15 years and, certainly, the centenary has rekindled the interest and spurred the publication of excellent new literature. Nevertheless, this bibliography has been mostly devoted to the field of diplomatic history and international relations. Given the detailed information we have now acquired on the activities of the belligerent nations’ intelligence services, control of the press and pressures upon different cabinets, we can conclude that Spain was all but in name a theatre of operations during the Great War. However, we know much less about the cultural impact of the international conflict. The book under review is therefore a laudable attempt to redress this glaring omission.

Having borrowed its title from the pioneering and extremely influential article on the ideological division of Spain during the Great War by the American historian Gerald Meaker, this book is divided into three thematic sections. The first, “political influences beyond the frontiers”, examines the wider case of Europe as well as particular case-studies (Spain, Portugal, Italy and Latin America) in order to

analyze the origins and legacy of the Great War with particular attention to the role of intellectuals in shaping the myths around the conflict. The second, "Black Storms, Intimate Pains", explores the complexities and difficulties involved in the narrative representation of the war. And, the third, "Spanish and Catalan imaginaries in the European conflict", concentrates on the question of neutrality, nationalist discourse and cultural impact mainly on Catalonia but also on its implications for the rest of Spain. Overall, this is a very competent, well-written and wide-ranging contribution to the field of cultural studies. Furthermore, it not only fills a glaring gap in Spanish literature but goes much beyond. It explores and reflects on a broad myriad of complimentary subjects including the history of ideas/intellectuals, stateless nationalism, neutrality, historical memory, etc.

The quality of the articles as well as the outstanding expertise of the authors in their particular areas result in a convincing and compelling text. Since it is impossible to dwell on each essay, given the sheer numbers and the length limitations on this review, I would like to single out three of them. First of all, it was a very wise decision to start the book with an article by someone of such international reputation as José Álvarez Junco. In fact, this a concise but welcoming analysis of the causes and consequences of the war with a central reference to the classic thesis by Arno Mayer on the persistence and decay of the world of traditional elites; a world that was shattered by the arrival of mass politics and the parallel socio-economic modernization that heralded the globalization phenomenon. Secondly, one needs to refer to the article by Maximiliano Fuentes Codera. His contribution amounts to a synthesis of his ongoing research on neutrality, intellectuals and the cultural impact of the Great War in Spain, a field in which he has become a leading expert. Finally, the article by another well-established historian, the French hispanist Paul Aubert, also needs to be mentioned. In just 30 pages, Aubert examines in depth the struggle of Spanish francophiles not just to win the passionate and internal debate in Spain but also to set an agenda of modernization and change. As Aubert concludes, theirs was a history of frustration.

To sum up, this is an impressive and reader-friendly book. It provides an attractive and compelling contribution to the subject of the cultural dimension of the Great War, a field hitherto largely neglected in Spain. On the key question of its

market and readership, I have a serious reservation though; a reservation based on the fact that the book includes far too many, in my opinion, academic projects of Catalan scholars devoted to Catalan issues. Without detriment to the scholarship, the fact that it is being published in English and therefore for an Anglo-Saxon audience, the large of these articles could preclude the text from being attractive to the wider spectrum represented by history and politics departments, and left only with the narrow target of Hispanic Studies.

FRANCISCO J. ROMERO SALVADO

Reader in Modern Spanish History

University of Bristol